DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 388 804 CE 070 198

AUTHOR Clark, Karen L.
TITLE Education in the Workplace: Bridging the Gap.
PUB DATE Nov 94
NOTE 33p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association (Nashville, TN, November 1994).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Education; Educational Research; Employer Employee Relationship; *Job Training; *Labor Force Development; Retraining; *Small Businesses; Vocational Education

ABSTRACT

A study surveyed owners of 20 small businesses in North County, San Diego, to determine evidence of teaching and learning. A 13-question survey instrument gathered information regarding whether training and/or education for employees was available, what education was offered, how it fit into the evaluation process, and how business owners saw their role as it related to teaching and learning in the workplace. Training appeared to comply with accreditation and was driven by a need to survive in a difficult economy. Although the majority of respondents were acutely aware of the necessity for continuous training/education for their employees, time and resources were scarce. Although training/education occurred in most businesses, it was driven by regulations, customer service, and a commitment to safety compliance issues. Little time was available for learning related to professional growth and personal discovery. With regard to their role in the teaching and learning process, the business owners expressed a sincere concern for their employees and their welfare, but struggled with the knowledge that training/education was necessary. Recommendations for further research included the impact of restructuring on teaching and learning in the workplace, role of the chief executive officer as the instructional leader, and investigation of rewards for training/education in the workplace. (A sample interview questionnaire is appended.) (YLB)

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ED 388 804

EDUCATION IN THE WORKPLACE: BRIDGING THE GAP

Karen L. Clark, Ed.D.
National University

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A Paper Presented at the
Mid-South Educational Research Association
Meeting November, Nashville, Tennessee, 1994

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One of the misconceptions of our cultural heritage is the notion that organizations exist purely to get things done. This is only one of their purposes; it is their work purpose. But every organization is also a social system that serves as an instrument for helping people meet human needs and achieve human goals. In fact, this is the primary purpose for which people take part in the organization. Organizations have a human purpose.

Malcolm Knowles, 1980

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments..... 2

Introduction..... 4

Statement of the Problem..... 5

Assumption of the Study..... 5

Design, Time Period, and Execution Plan..... 5

Demographic Data..... 7

Results..... 7

Summary of the Results..... 15

Implications for Further Investigation..... 16

Conclusion..... 17

Appendix A - Sample Interview Questionnaire..... 19

Appendix B - Sample Mission Statements..... 22

Appendix C - Clark's Effective Company Model..... 26

Acknowledgments

The completion of this document was not without credit to numerous individuals who supported this research project.

I am grateful to Dr. Jerry C. Lee, President of National University who so generously provided a grant to assist in this research effort. I am also thankful to Dr. Allyson Handley, Dean, of School of Education and Human Services who encouraged my plan and listened to my stories. I wish to also thank Dr. Gary Zucca, Dean, School of Management and Technology who tolerated my enthusiasm.

A special thanks to my daughters, Sonia and Christina, who had to endure all of the spontaneous phone calls regarding the progress of this adventure.

I wish to express my deepest appreciation to owners of small businesses, who in spite of a serious economic challenge, not enough hours in the day, and putting up with an over zealous professor from National University, shared their thoughts about teaching and learning in the workplace, and made this research possible. The following individuals offered their time, wisdom, and inspiration: Mr. Leo Macaluso of Encinitas Foreign and Domestic Auto Repair, Mr. Rick Smith of Leucadia Glass, Ms. Jona Harrington of Encinitas Stationers, Mr. Tim Sullivan of K-Best 95, Mr. Gregory Miller of Roberts and Miller Accountants, Inc., Mr. Mark Liggitt of Kudos Hairdresser Studio, Ms.

Debbie from the Yoga Room, Mr. Guy from a manufacturing company in Carlsbad, Dr. Ron Bills of Tri-City Children's Dentistry and Orthodontics, Mr. David Agygos of Obnoxious Youth, Mr. Steve Edwards of Quill Communications, Mr. David Hodges of Belly Up Tavern, Mr. Mickie Hittleman of Apollo Lock Unlimited, Mr. Jim Rowland of Pacific Coast Detailing, Mr. Terry Cameron of TC Construction Company, Ms. Susan Zagorsky of Direct Maytag, Mr. Randy Kammer of Nurseryland, Mr. Jim Chanchowmino of the Potato Shack, Mr. Nick Nichelson of E-Z Equipment, and one business owner representing a small company, who wished to remain anonymous.

Introduction

The value of education in the workplace is becoming more evident as large and small businesses face the turbulent and taxing challenges of the twentieth century. As we enter a new millennium, teaching and learning will become an even greater dynamic for corporate success as it becomes an integral widget in the complex machinery of our times. In fact, it will be declared a major component in corporate America's cultural DNA.

As companies are discovery the benefits of integrating educational goals for employees with bottom line projections, the intellectual capital of today's workforce is developing into a highly valued commodity. For example, AT&T, Hughes Aircraft, Motorola, and their corporate cousins, are investing time, money, and energy in developing internal networks of learning centers, research domiciles, and think tanks for the purpose of increasing productivity and enhancing problem solving skills for their employees. All of this is for the purpose of developing more prosperous portfolios at a time when redefining our destiny has become a crap shoot.

This research was conducted for the purpose of recognizing small businesses and their owners whose stories do not appear in the latest edition of *Furtune* magazine or the *Harvard Business Review.* Instead, this project is dedicated to companies who have managed to remain in the shadow of publicity, and establish their own place in the sun.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to determine whether or not training and/or education for employees is available, what education is offered, how it fits into the evaluation process, and how the business owners see their role as it relates to the teaching and learning environment in the workplace.

Assumptions of the Study

It is assumed that the small business owners will participate in the study and demonstrate a sincere and honest response to the questions in the interview.

Design, Time Period, and Execution Plan

The objective of this research is to interview owners of twenty small businesses in North County, San Diego, for the purpose of determining evidence of teaching and learning.

The description of the instrument used in this study is a thirteen question survey instrument designed to address the following:

1. Name of the organization.
2. Number of employees.

3. Years in business.
4. What is your position?
5. Do you currently offer training/education for the employees?
6. Please identify what is offered.
7. What is the purpose?
8. What is the benefit?
9. Who determines what training or education occur?
10. Is training/education for employees included in the evaluation of employees?
11. Do you currently have a mission statement? Yes___ No____
What is it?
12. How do you see your role as it relates to teaching and learning that occurs in your organization?
13. Are you currently involved in your own training/education?

The time period for this research project was six months. The plan to execute the interview process included the following: (1) designing the survey, (2) selecting twenty small businesses in North County San Diego, at random, (3) conducting the interviews, (4) collecting and evaluating the data, and (5) finalizing the results. The final section is dedicated to making recommendations for further investigation.

Demographic Data

Twenty owners of small businesses were interviewed for this research project. All of the owners managed companies in North County San Diego, California.

Results

The findings for this research project are designed to summarize the data according to the interview questions. Each interview question will be listed along with a summary.

1. Name of the organization

The business owners who participated in the interview process represented a diverse group. The businesses selected at random included owners from the following represented categories: automobile repair, nursery, dental office, restaurant, accounting firm, hairdresser, glass shop, broadcasting, stationers, health center, appliance sales and repair, clothing, communications, home and commercial security, and design detail.

2. Number of employees

The twenty small businesses represented in this research project ranged in number of employees from five to two hundred employees

with the majority of businesses employing between ten and thirty employees.

3. Years in business.

The number of years in business ranged from one year to twenty-four years.

4. What is your position?

Eighteen of the interviewees were owners and two of the interviewees were managers.

5. Do you currently offer training/education for the employees?

All but one of the companies reported that their employees participated in training/education. One respondent candidly reported, "We don't educate our employees. We hire experienced workers who do not need additional training except for everyday stuff."

6. Please identify what is offered.

The responses to this question were very diversified. Twelve of the business owners specifically addressed the issue that much of the training/education that occurs is mandated by state regulated agencies that require training/education for certification, etc. In some instances, continuing education was required that focused on medical training,

safety regulations, and seminars sponsored by government authorizing agencies.

The majority of the respondents referred to "on the job training", as a necessary ingredient for success. In fact, the majority of the business owners shared their frustration in not having enough time to commit to "on the job training" due to a survival mode that has taken over the daily operation of the business. In other words, due to a struggling economy, "on the job training" has been replaced with "how do we get through the day with the demands of the job, fewer employees, a greater overhead, and not enough time."

Two of the businesses offered reimbursements for formal education by way of grants. These business owners specifically mentioned that they rewarded their employees for completing formal education programs that either granted degrees or continuing education course credits.

Some of the business owners reported that suppliers provided education for the employees regarding new products, their use, and application. This opportunity existed primarily for the construction companies, health centered business, as well as for the nursery.

In the cases where accreditation agencies dictated the focus for employee training/education, the owners were specific to the requirements and often referred to the serious nature of the accreditation process.

7. What is the purpose?

Again, the responses were varied. One business owner commented, "So that employees are more productive and can get the job done." Another said, "We are learning as we go along. Learning makes things happen." One business owner offered, "The more knowledge the employees have, the better we can help our customers from getting hurt."

The majority of the business owners reported that the better trained the employee, the better able they are to make decisions. This according to the employer, saves time and money. One business owner reported, "What is important to me is the general philosophy of the company. You should give authority to the employees so they can make decisions. My employees have options; they can either make the wrong, right, offer a substitute, or the customer doesn't have to pay."

The majority of the respondents commented that the better skilled employees provide better service to customers. They also agreed that education for employees increased moral and self esteem for the employees.

8. What is the benefit?

Many of the business owners referred to the phrase, "time is money." Most of them agreed that training/education leads to greater productivity and more money. A few of the business owners referred to safety regulations and the importance training/education had on this

issue.

Comments such as, "A happy employee is a better employee," and "Employees who learn, grow, and work harder", were common. The unanimous consensus regarding the benefit, was more money!

9. Who determines what training/education occur?

Ninety per cent of the business owners replied, "I do", but this was not without further explanation. Some of the owners offered further insight. They referred to the fact that it might depend on the position, what customers want, and what is good for the office, etc. Furthermore, a few of the business owners mentioned that training/education is driven by accreditation agencies and licensing bureaus, etc.

10. Is training/education for employees included in the evaluation of the employees?

Most of the business owners responded by suggesting this does not occur in a formal sense. Instead, general comments were made such as "We have a schedule to meet and whatever is needed to get the job done, gets done." This was joined however, with a sincere interest in the employees' growth. For example, almost all of the business owners made comments about wanting to help their employees become better workers and more productive. This included a concern for their "well being' and in some cases, a sincere concern for the employees' personal lives and struggles.

In addition, the majority mentioned that they wish they had more time to evaluate the employees and work with them to identify areas of training/education needs. Many commented, "I do not have enough time for this, and I wish I would do it more often."

All of the business owners with one exception, took pride in their employees and expressed a sincere concern for the responsibility the owner possessed in directing the training/education opportunities. One comment addressed this concern, as the respondent replied, "I care a lot about my people and what they learn and how they live their lives. Too many employers don't take the time to ask questions of their employees and use that information to help them. It simply doesn't happen enough."

11. Do you currently have a mission statement? Yes____ No_____
What is it?

Only one third of the businesses had written mission statements. Of the one third who had mission statements in writing, four business owners actively referred to them. One business owner commented, "We don't have one, but we want one. Our mission is to survive." Another interview included the comment, "Our mission is to do the best that we can do."

A few of the respondents were somewhat surprised by the question, and replied that their "mission" was dictated by codes and

regulations.

12. How do you see your role as it relates to teaching and learning that occurs in your organization?

This question solicited the greatest response in both time and interest on the part of the business owners. It is impossible to summarize the data. Many of the responses deserve notation, and they include:

- "I am a nuts and bolts kind of guy. When something new comes along, I am the one who teaches the employees."
- "Training has to start at the top,"
- "I have an important role to encourage and promote training."
- "There is an art to my job. They watch me and learn."
- "I oversee people who train others."
- "I am responsible for the teaching and learning curriculum."
- "If I don't do it, then they don't do it. If I don't follow up, it doesn't happen. The economy is so bad and I had to cut back so much that I have to make sure it gets done."
- "My role is to make sure teaching is available. We have outside educators that come in and help. Product knowledge and service are available."
- "I am like a coach, I stress the importance of it, 'the job', the radio business has no formal training-we train them."
- "I do it like a teacher, but I don't have the time to do it right, I

have to put out the fires."

- "The public is your task master, We need to be here when our employees aren't. We need to be concerned about paying the bills, not just showing up for work."
- "My job is to check with the customers before we change things. We make changes for quality reasons."
- "It's important to develop trust. It is hard to get a good team. To find the right person to do the job is difficult. You can't just train anyone off the street to do the job."
- "I believe that job performance dictates wage. More education means that my employees perform better."

13. Are you currently involved in your own training/education?

Almost without exception, the responses were affirmative. Reasons given for continuing education included: (1) selling products is based on product knowledge, (2) joining organizations that share knowledge about the business secures networking, (3) applying what has been learned in the last twenty years to today's workforce requires keeping up (4) maintaining certification and licensing, and (5) the need to do research to find out what competitors are doing.

Perhaps the responses can be summarized by the following: "Too many of us become experts and don't continue to learn. This organization needs to learn and to grow. It isn't going to happen 100%, but it is the little problems I face that encourage me to learn." A final

quotation captures the essence of the majority of responses, "Someone is going to learn something new every day. If not, then they are sleeping."

Summary of Results

After interviewing twenty owners of small businesses, in North County San Diego, I am left with the impression that training complies with accreditation and is driven by a need to survive in a difficult economy. Although the majority of the respondents were acutely aware of the necessity for continuous training/education for their employees, there seems to be little time and very scare resources for this to occur.

While training/education occurred in most businesses, the primary purpose seemed to rest on regulations, customer service, and a commitment to safety compliance issues. There appears to be little time for learning for the sake of learning as it relates to professional growth and personal discovery. This is due in part, to the economic challenges in today's workforce coupled with a lack of resources for employee training/education.

As the interviews progressed for each business owner, the respondents expressed a greater interest in the subject of teaching and learning in the workplace. Particular to their role in the teaching and learning process, the business owners took great interest in the topic and expressed a sincere concern for their employees and their welfare. They seemed to struggle with the knowledge that training/education

was necessary, but at the same time, they declared their complete frustration with the economy and its impact on daily operations of the businesses. Without exception, the business owners expressed a concern for the topic of teaching and learning at the workplace, and enthusiastically tackled the questions related to their role in the process.

Implications for Further Investigation

As mind mapping, think teams, and job description transforming into job competencies inundate the workplace, we will soon discover that what employees need to "do" to get the job done will be replaced by what employees need to "know" to get the job done.

Further research must occur on the topic of teaching and learning in the workplace. Particular to this research, the following recommendations for further research include:

1. The impact that restructuring has on teaching and learning in the workplace.
2. The role of the CEO as the instructional leader.
3. Evidence of education goals for the workforce.
4. The impact of multicultural diversity on teaching and learning in the workplace.

5. Comparative research on product like companies as it relates to teaching and learning in the workplace.
6. Exploring the learning objectives of accreditation agencies and what role teaching and learning play.
7. Investigate rewards for training/education in the workplace.
8. Determine presence of mission statement and how they address teaching and learning.
9. Conduct a comparative study on the attitude of teaching and learning for the employer versus the employee.

Conclusion

We must abolish the idea that education and the workplace are separate establishments in our social, political, and economic systems. There has never been a more exciting time than now to embrace the idea that teaching and learning are ubiquitous.

Restructuring, reengineering, and redesigning the workplace must include in the strategic master plan a specific section devoted to learning that occurs in the organization, and how it is positioned with productivity. The responsibility of teaching must become an essential component of ownership and management in order to assure that teaching and learning is awarded its rightful place. Additionally, the idea that workplaces address curriculum issues and learning modalities must come foreword.

This commitment supports the effort towards continuous improvement, and invites teaching and learning to take a comfortable place in the corporate culture. It is the passion however, that is lacking. This is what motivates risk taking, testing unfamiliar territory, and engaging in new explorations. It is the CEO who not only manages by walking around, but "educates by walking around" who will be the vanguard of this transformation. The business owners who realize the edge will, in spite of a lack of resources, time, and energy, support the notion that employees who are learning more, are employees who are producing more..

It simply is not enough to assume that by itself, teaching and learning will become an integral part of what we do. We must invite it into our workplaces and make it a part of who we are. We must bridge the gap as some of these business owners who were interviewed have done.

In our Western culture, we are told as children that we will attend school in order to learn. Rarely, if ever, is it said that we will attend work in order to learn. As long as we hold onto the belief that school is for learning and work is for producing, we will not realize the commonalties school and work share. The mutual experiences of growth, discovery, and productivity occur in both school and the workplace. We attend school to learn and we must also attend work to learn.

When this practice becomes a part of everyday living, we will

truly do justice to teaching and learning. The by-product of this transformation will lead to greater productivity and a profound reminder that the pioneers who are currently practicing this belief, are making a difference by bridging the gap.

APPENDIX A - SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

TEACHING AND LEARNING INTERVIEW

1. Name of the organization?

_____

_____

2. Number of employees?

_____

_____

3. Years in business?

_____

4. What is your position?

_____

5. Do you currently offer training/education for the employees?

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. Please identify what is offered:

7. What is the purpose?

8. What is the benefit?

9. Who determines what training/education occur?

10. Is training/education for employees included in the evaluating of employees?

_____

_____

_____

_____

11. Do you currently have a mission statement? Yes_____ No_____
What is it?

_____

_____

_____

_____

12. How do you see your role as it relates to teaching and learning that occurs in your organization?

_____

_____

_____

13. Are you currently involved in your own training/education?

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX B - SAMPLE MISSION STATEMENTS

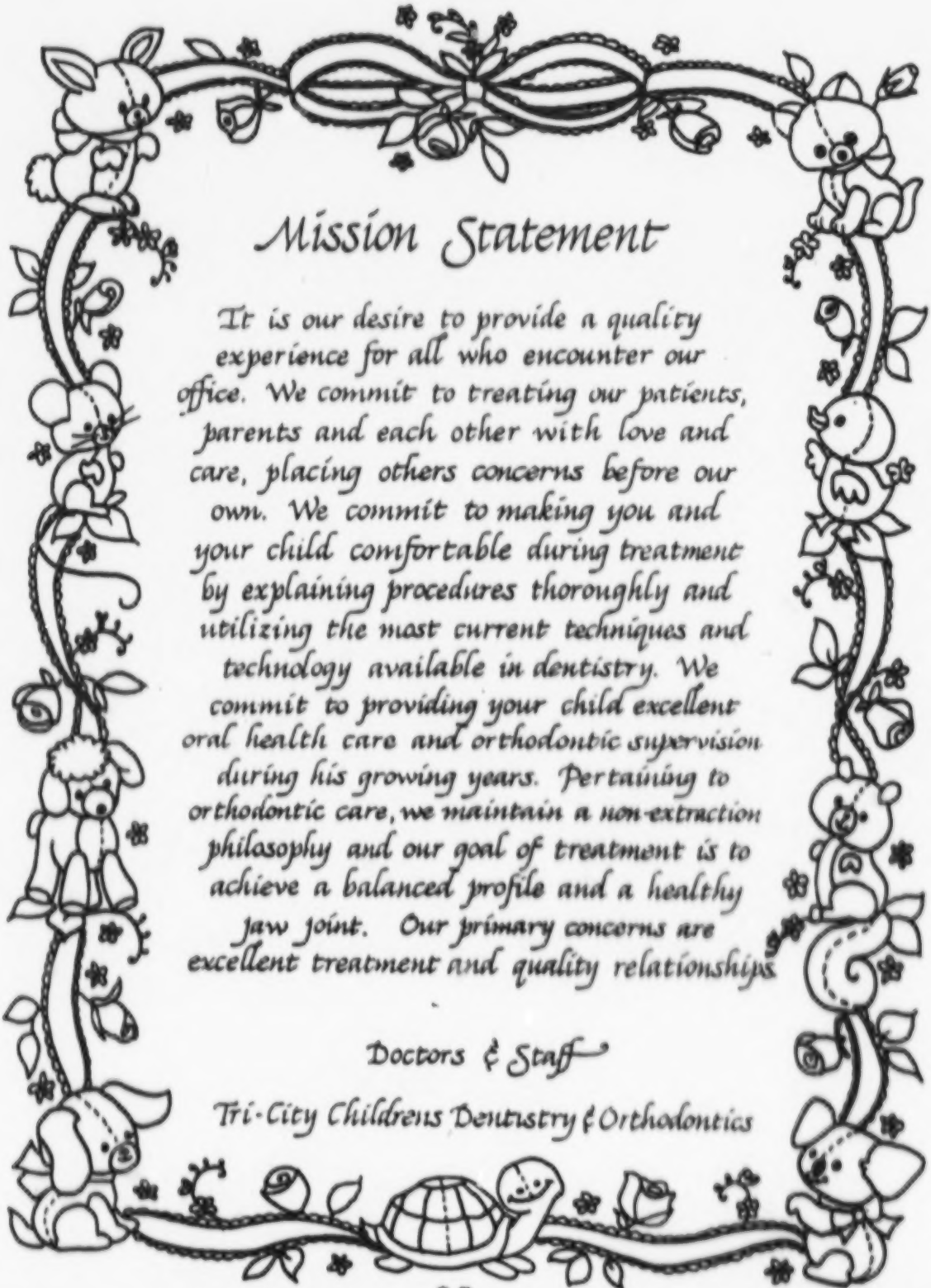
Mission Statement

Our mission is to grow successfully in the community by offering professional automotive services. The company will accomplish this by.....

- *offering a team of professional, ethical, well trained staff driven by a dedication to 100% customer satisfaction*
- *providing continued education to all of the staff*
- *providing up-to-date vehicle data*
- *investing in the best diagnostic equipment available*
- *being environmentally responsible*
- *maintaining a safe, clean working facility*
- *continually evaluating goals and setting new goals for the betterment of the company, the staff and the community as a whole*

We will strive to build our industry's reputation through our sincerity and education of the community

Encinitas Foreign & Domestic Auto Repair



Mission Statement

It is our desire to provide a quality experience for all who encounter our office. We commit to treating our patients, parents and each other with love and care, placing others concerns before our own. We commit to making you and your child comfortable during treatment by explaining procedures thoroughly and utilizing the most current techniques and technology available in dentistry. We commit to providing your child excellent oral health care and orthodontic supervision during his growing years. Pertaining to orthodontic care, we maintain a non-extraction philosophy and our goal of treatment is to achieve a balanced profile and a healthy jaw joint. Our primary concerns are excellent treatment and quality relationships.

Doctors & Staff

Tri-City Childrens Dentistry & Orthodontics

SUNBELT NURSERY GROUP, INC.

MISSION STATEMENT

DEFINITION

Sunbelt Nursery Group is the dominant nursery retailer in six of America's 11 largest cities. Operating 98 company-owned stores in Texas, Oklahoma, California and Arizona, Sunbelt is the leading specialty retailer of nursery stock, lawn and garden supplies, and seasonal decorative items for the home and patio.

MISSION

Sunbelt Nursery Group is a specialty retail company that serves all households in its market areas, providing customers convenient, exciting shopping for goods that enhance their quality of life through home beautification. Merchandise sold in our stores includes nursery stock, gardening supplies, seasonal products such as Christmas trees and decorations, and selected furnishings and goods for outdoor living and entertaining. Our employees provide expert advice on the care of plants and plant-related products, and superior customer service.

STRATEGY

Sunbelt Nursery Group's focus is on customer wants and needs in order to produce profitable sales within our market niche.

New customers are obtained through the impact of advertising programs, the word-of-mouth spread by satisfied customers, the presentation of clean, well-organized and maintained stores that invite customers to have a pleasant and interesting shopping experience, and through construction and acquisition of new store locations.

Current customers will be retained by focusing on customer satisfaction. Our goal is to consistently provide them full value for their dollars by offering the fun and excitement of enhancing the design and fashion of their homes with ever evolving quality assortments of new, different and exotic merchandise complemented with expert advice. The customer will receive better value because Sunbelt will provide:

1. Expert advice readily provided by trained personnel.
2. Quality merchandise.
3. Product assortments that are deep, broad and always evolving.
4. Stores that are clean, orderly and easy to shop.
5. Pricing that is fair and reasonable.
6. Cheerful customer service.
7. Operational stability.
8. Integrity in all transactions.

Obnoxious Youth designs, arranges for the manufacture of, and distributes beachwear, skatewear, snowboardwear, and casual sportswear primarily for young men and boys under the Obnoxious Youth label. The company's products for domestic sales are made primarily in the USA and sold at one surf shop, soon to many specialty stores and selected department store locations.

APPENDIX C - CLARK'S EFECTIVE COMPANY MODEL

CLARK'S EFFECTIVE COMPANY MODEL

- The leadership of the CEO is characterized by substantial attention to the quality of improved performance demonstrated by the ability to educate.

- There is a clear mission statement

- There exists a belief in the company that all employees can produce.

- There is a pervasive and broadly understood employee improvement focus that embraces teaching and learning.

- An orderly and safe climate exists that is conducive to on-the-job education.

- Employee achievement and growth is used as a measure for product evaluation.

- A positive company and community relationship is developed.

- Increased success is directly linked to the problem solving skills of the employees in an environment open to developing and rewarding this skill.